

WHY THE BIBLE?

We live in a country today in which the big thing is to be politically correct. It is very important not to offend anyone ... even if they are drastically wrong! And that is not just in our society ... it is in our churches as well. As a result ... the churches have become wishy-washy. The preachers are preaching sermons that are more of a social talk than a sermon. We just want to love everybody ... we don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. Well ... loving everyone ... that is a good thing! Watering down what the Church believes so we don't hurt anyone's feelings ... that is a whole different story! But we have to be careful or we will run people off ... right? No ... it is not right!

Let me share something with you that comes from Thom Rainer's book *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched*. The book is a survey of people who were unchurched people and had recently started attending church and becoming active in service. Here is what he found:

- 91% of the formerly unchurched thought doctrine was important.
- They were insistent that the churches should be uncompromising in their stand
- Churches that are lukewarm in their convictions do not attract the unchurched

If that is the case ... then it seems like the unchurched are more concerned about standing on the truth than a lot of the church people are! They don't want some mealy-mouthed Christianity ... they don't want something that changes to accommodate everyone's feelings ... they want truth ... absolute truth! ... Something that is not going to change on them!

Why is it that firm doctrine is so attractive to the unchurched? It is because they want something that they can stand on that will not shift! Something that stands firm ... something that is not going to change! Everything else in this world changes ... they want something that is the same yesterday ... today ... and forever! They want something they can be sure of!

They are not looking for some soothing salve from the preacher that covers up all their little boo-boo's ... they want the healing stuff ... something that makes them whole and well spiritually!

Well ... that is what Isaac and I are going to talk about for the next 7 weeks! ... the basic doctrines that we as the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ stand on. What is it that we believe about

- Why the Bible
- Why the Holy Spirit
- Why the Lord's Supper
- Why Baptism
- Why Grace
- Why Church
- Why Giving

Around the turn of the 19th Century ... there was a group of people who were disillusioned with what the Church had become! It was divided and it was biblically anemic! It was not following Scripture ... they had created creeds and equated sacred tradition with the Bible. The Church of that period of time did not even come close to resembling the Church found in the book of Acts. It had strayed completely away from the Church that God had intended for it to be.

How did they know that? **Because the Bible ... God's word ... told them so!** That group of people became known as the Restoration Movement! They wanted to restore the Church back to the Church of the New Testament. They knew that the only way that would happen is if they stayed true to the Bible. The Christian Churches/Churches of Christ are those people. TRI is from that movement! We are those people! Our church believes strongly that the Bible has to be the foundation of all that we do! That is not the case with all the churches of today!

Barna Research Group took a survey in January of 2004 of pastors all over America ... asking them if they believed that absolute moral truth exists, and that is based upon the Bible ..." The results are as follows ...

Southern Baptist ... 71%
Pastors of Baptist Churches other than SBC ... 51%
Nondenominational Protestant ... 51%

Charismatic or Pentecostal ... 44%
Pastors of Black Churches ... 35%
Mainline ... 28% (American Baptist Churches/USA, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Presbyterian Church, USA)
United Methodist ... 27%
Seminary graduates ... 45%
Male pastors (average) ... 55%
Female pastors (average) ... 15%

Where do the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ stand on this? We believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and is the basis of all truth.

One of the slogans of the Restoration Movement is "No Creed but Christ ... No book but the Bible!" Another is "Where the Bible speaks, we speak ... where the Bible is silent ... we are silent." WE do not add sacred traditions to the word of God. We do not add creeds ... WE stand on the Word alone! We stand on God's truth not man's opinions.

This morning I want us to take a closer look at the Bible. Why is it that we are willing to base our whole eternal future on the words found in this book?

1 ... WHY IS THE BIBLE SO IMPORTANT?

a. The Bible is Inspired

The first reason that we see the Bible is so important is because it is the inspired word of God. It is God's word ... not man's. That makes it extremely important to us who want to hear from God and who want to know what He expects of us!

Let 's look at a couple of Scriptures:

I PETER 1:10-11 (NLT) ... ¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

MATTHEW 4:4 (NIV) ... Jesus is being tempted by Satan in the wilderness ... Satan is trying to get Jesus to turn stones into bread and eat them. Jesus replies ... "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Every word that comes from the mouth of God that Jesus is referring to here is Scripture.

And then **II TIMOTHY 3:16** ... All Scripture is inspired by God ...

The Bible is the Word of God ... it is from Him ... And if we want to be the church that God intends for us to be ... it only makes sense that we follow His Word!

b. The Bible is Inerrant

The Bible is not only God-breathed or inspired ... it is inerrant. What in the world does that mean? The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy defines it well ... "*Inerrant signifies the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scriptures is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions.*"

There is a key here that I want you to notice. Inerrancy does not say that there will not be any grammatical errors in your version of the Bible. You may find some. It does not say that your version of the Bible may not have some mistakes in it. There may be some. That is one of the advantages of having so many different versions available to us today. We can test them against each other and against the Hebrew and Greek to see what God really did say! What inerrancy refers to is that the Bible contains the truth of God ... and that truth is just that ... truth!

In **PSALM 19:7-8 (NIV)** we find this said ... The law of the LORD is perfect ... The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy ... The precepts of the LORD are right,

PROVERBS 30:5 (NIV) tells us ... Every word of God is flawless;

c. The Bible is Authoritative

The word of God is not only inspired and inerrant ... it is authoritative. This should be a 'no-brainer' for us! If the Bible is the Word from God ... and it is truth ... then it should be authoritative ... right? You have seen the old

commercial ... **"When EF Hutton Speaks ... everyone listens."** When God speaks ... everyone better listen!

JAMES 2:8-10 (NIV) ... ⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," ^d you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. God has placed an authority in the Scriptures that literally dictates where we spend our eternity. If we obey His word ... we have eternal life with Him. IF we don't ... we have eternal death in Hell. The Bible is not just another book to place on your bookshelf ... it is the insight to eternal life.

d. The Bible is Effective

The Bible is inspired ... it is inerrant ... it is authoritative and ... it is effective! Isaiah tells us exactly how effective the Bible can be in **ISAIAH 55:10-11 (NIV) ...** ¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

HEBREWS 4:12 (NIV) ... ¹² For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

The word of God can change lives! It can accomplish what God intends for it to do! It will do what it says it will do!

There was a lady who lived way out in the country. A vacuum cleaner salesman came by and began to give her his high-pressure sales talk. "Madam, I have the greatest product you have ever seen. This vacuum cleaner will eat up anything. In fact, if you are not careful ... it will even suck up your carpet." Before the woman could reply he walked over to the fireplace and took some of the ashes and threw them on the carpet. He took some dirt and junk from his pocket and threw it on the carpet too. "Madam,

I want you to see this thing work. I guarantee you that it will pick up everything on that carpet ... or I will eat what is left!" The woman looked at the salesman and said "Well, Mister ... start eating ... we ain't got no electricity."

The reason the Bible is effective is because of Who it is plugged into ... Whose word it is! The Bible is God's word ... it is backed by God ... and it is inspired by God ... and it is inerrant ... it is authoritative ... and it is effective! That is why we are a people of the book! That is why we believe the Bible needs to be the base from which we work! That is why we believe we need to be a Church of the Bible!

2 ... HOW CAN I KNOW THE BIBLE IS TRUE?

Is there a way that we can know the Bible is true other than because the Bible says it is? If I am talking to a person that does not believe the Bible is truth ... I cannot use the Bible to prove it ... he does not believe in the Bible. That is a circular argument. So is there anything outside of the Bible that proves it is true?

a. By my Personal Experience

One of the ways that I can know that the Bible is true is because of personal experience. I have seen the Words of God come true in my life. I have seen them come true in lives of people around me! When I see people who are as evil as can be and they accept Christ and their lives are completely turned around because they have heard the word of God ... then I know that the Word of God is true. But people cannot base truth on experience alone! Sometimes experience can be misleading!

b. By Science

Science also proves the Bible is true! There are many examples we could use from the field of science ... but let me give you just one due to time ...

Let's take a look at the **Science of geology**. Scientists speak of what is called *isostasy* That is the science of balance. The idea behind it is that for the earth to be able to orbit through space ... it has to be perfectly balanced. To accomplish that ... there has to be just the right amount of land mass balanced by just the right amount of water mass.

Long before scientists discovered this truth ... Isaiah wrote in **ISAIAH 40:12 (NIV)** ... Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

What scientists are discovering to be truth ... it is already in the Scriptures! The scientists are reinforcing the truth of the Bible constantly.

c. By Archeology

Another means by which we can know the Bible is true is through archeology. For example ...

The Scriptures speak of a nation of people called the Hittites. But critics of the Bible were claiming that the Hittite people never existed ... therefore the Bible must be false. Archaeologist Hugh Winckler excavated the Hittite capital of Boghaz-Koa and recovered thousands of Hittite texts, as well as the famous Hittite code.

Again ... this is only one example ... there are hundreds ... but I have made the point that I want to make here.

d. By Fulfilled Prophecy

As strong as these three arguments might be on behalf of the Bible's truth ... I think this is the strongest! The Bible is full of prophecies that have come true. There is no way that the writer could really know what was going to happen ... but he wrote what God inspired him to write ... and it came true. We use this measure for truth all the time! **If we say we are going to do something and we do it ... then we told the truth ... right?** Fulfilled prophecy proves the truth of the Bible.

Peter W. Stoner ... a scientist and mathematician ... had 600 students use the "principle of probability" to check out the chances of a few of the prophecies coming true in the Bible. The law of Probability says ...

- The chances of one claim coming true is 1 in A
- The chances of two claims about the same thing coming true is 1 in AxB
- The more claims that come true ... the higher the odds become.

The students figured used the "Principle of Probability" to see the odds of **Ezekiel 26:3-16** happening. This passage is about the destruction of Tyre. These seven statements were made in the Bible about this event.

1. Nebuchadnezzar would take the city
2. Other nations would help fulfill the prophecy
3. Tyre would be flattened like the top of a rock
4. The city would become a place where fisherman would spread their nets
5. Tyre's stones and timbers would be laid in the sea
6. Citizens of other cities would become afraid because of Tyre's fall
7. The old city would never be rebuilt.

The odds for all seven of these things to come true is 1 in 400 million ... and yet they did occur.

Let me better explain to you what those odds mean ...

if you covered the entire state of Texas with silver dollars two feet deep. And if you mark an X on just one of them with a magic marker ... and you mix them all up and then parachute a man from an airplane somewhere over Texas and when he lands he leans over and picks up a coin ... that coin is the one that has the X marked on it.

Fulfilled prophecy proves that the Bible is true.

Do you understand why the Bible is so important to this church? It is the source of truth. It points us to the God of the Word. We are able to hear from Him and we can know that what it says is true. When you know those things ... it is easy to base your whole eternity on what it says.

So the Bible is God's Word ... and it is True ... so what does that mean to me? What does the Bible have to do with my life?

3 ... WHY IS THE BIBLE IMPORTANT TO US?

a. It Exposes Our Sin

One thing that the Bible does is it exposes our sins! It let's us know that we are out of kilter with God. That there are some changes that need to be made! **ROMANS 3:23 (NIV) ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** Guess what ... that all includes you and me. We do not match up to what God expects and demands.

The Bible does not handle this in a politically correct way! It calls black black ... and white white ... and does not back down! And if the Bible is truth ... and if we want to be people of the Bible ... then we have to call it the way it is!

Friends ... we have to live our lives in-line with the Bible. And when it exposes a sin in our lives ... we need to change our lives ... not the Bible.

b. It Points Us Toward Salvation

The Bible not only exposes sin ... but it points toward how we can be saved from the lost condition sin puts us in.

LUKE 8:12 (NIV) ... Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. The word that Jesus is talking about here is the Scripture ... God's word.

ACTS 4:12 (NIV) ... ¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” Listen to this ... if it were not for the Bible ... you would never hear that statement. And if you never hear that statement ... you have no chance of salvation.

The Bible points toward salvation!

c. It Equips Us for Spiritual Battle

The Bible is our weapon in Spiritual Warfare! Look at **EPHESIANS 6:11-12 & 17 (NIV)** ... ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ... ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Without God's Word ... without the Bible ... we are without our weapon in war! That is how important the Bible is! The problem is that so many people want to take this sword of steel and make it a sword of soft foam so it won't hurt anyone. We cannot water down God's word! It is the weapon against Satan and his demons ... and when we water it down ... Satan wins!

d. It Gives Us a Glimpse Into the Future

I think that one of the neatest things about the Bible is that it gives us a glimpse into the future! Look at **REVELATION 21:1-7 (NIV)** ... Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”^m for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’^u or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”⁶ He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

But none of that is possible if you did not in some way ... hear from God's word! That is how important the Bible is! That is why we stand firm on what it says! That is why we will not water it down! We will stand on what it says!

CONCLUSION:

C.H. Spurgeon once said "I would recommend you either believe God up to the hilt, or else not to believe at all. Believe this book of God, every letter of it, or else reject it. There is no logical standing place between the two. Be satisfied with nothing less than a faith that swims in the deeps of divine revelation; a faith that paddles about the edge of the water is poor faith at best. It is little better than a dry-land faith, and is not good for much."

Are you willing to place your faith on the word of God? Are you willing to swim in the depths of divine revelation? Are you willing to stand on God's word ... even if everyone else turns away?

B_I_B_L_E